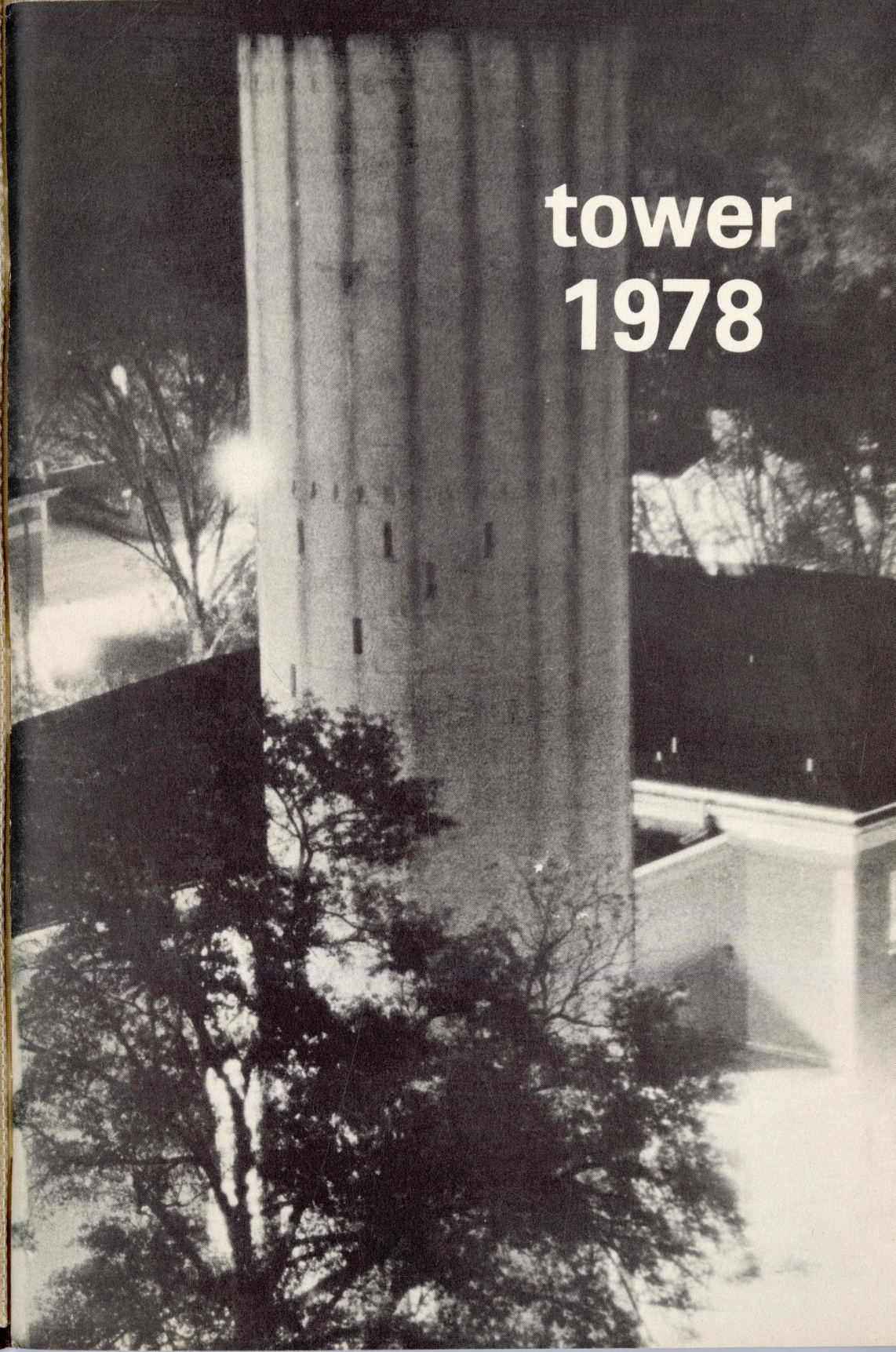
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Assistant to Captain: Rhonda McGee

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Editor's Notes:

No *TOWER* award for prose was given because the judges and I agreed that there was no work which was outstanding enough to merit an award.

Art work was chosen from the Students' Honor Show, and as such was meritorious in itself. For this reason, the judges and I have agreed that the *TOWER* award for art should be shared by those students whose works were used.

* *TOWER* Award

166710

The Bacon Is Burning

I'm going to break that clock into a thousand pieces one of these mornings. There goes Mary once again. She gets up so readily. She's been faithful in that respect. She's always so sure of everything she does. It's annoying sometimes. I could be fired from work and everything I'd worked for would be gone. Where are my house shoes? Probably in the closet.

I won't start a fight this morning, no matter what happens. Last night was enough to last me forever. Same old thing, I wish she would quit bothering me about it. So I don't go to church every time the doors open. I'm still a good man. The boys shouldn't be made to go to church either. Ten years old is old enough to decide. Besides, who likes a goody-goody? Umm-hmm . . . that bacon smells good. My stomach feels like a bottomless pit.

Listen to those boys always laughing together. The only day I have to spend with them and they're off listening to words of hellfire and doomsday. She talked of the raption, rapture . . . or something like that last night. Started crying. But she always ends right. She apologizes and everything. Let's open this window. What a beautiful morning. Wow! That was really a bad crash. That car just ran right into a telephone pole. I can't see the driver. He must really be hurt. I'll call for an ambulance. I bet the boys are watching the wreck. They sure did get quiet all of a sudden. Now "O" for Operator. Hello. Hello . . . Operator . . . Operator . . . Operator? The lines must be damaged. But the wreck was on another line of poles. Everything sure is quiet. Except for those sirens. I smell something burning. Better go down to the kitchen.

Just look at this mess. Burned bacon and eggs. She knows better than that. This is money right down the drain. Where is she? I'll look around the back.

She's just not here. I'd better hurry or I'll be left by my train. Those boys better hurry too or they will miss their bus. John! David! Get down here this minute! Mary ought to be looking for them, not me. I don't have the time. Boys! Quit playing games with me. Mary! Stop being moody. All right. To make you feel better I'll go to church next week. Come on honey! Damn! Where in heaven is everybody?

Kitty Roberts

Ashes

And so I sit
In quiet retreat
Away from the noise in my head.
A tiny sigh, in the still of my heart
Echoes, a little.
Peeking into the night of my emotions,
Tiptoeing past sleeping feelings, soft as a whisper,
I do not awaken them.
In the hush
The knots slowly loosen, and ease away;
All ties dissolve
In a softly fading
    Undramatic
        End.
Rest tired soul,
Let silence wash through you
And rinse the recall.
Love was a bad dream,
Regret, a mild sedative,
In the grey dawn.

Denise Ezell

The Huntress

Gray striped feline
Tip-toeing on hushed little cat paws
So cautious
As though she fears every
Shadow cast by
Rocks and branches
Suddenly she pauses
Her long, majestic tail
Quivering with excitement
Then . . .
P-O-U-N-C-E
A crumpled leaf
Is captive
In the prickly grasp.

Heidi Newman

A Taste of Life

Hold your fork in hand with style
And take a tiny bite.
Then fold your napkin straight
To pat your mouth just right.

Take your cup of tea in hand
And pretend to taste of it.
Hold your little finger out --
Don't you dare to bend it.

Dip your tips into the bowl
In case they're smudged a bit.
Forget you ever tried to eat;
Then fall into a pit.

Feba Hardyman

Smaller Than A Breadbox

PART ONE

On first investigation the day was wet, cold, dark, and rather uninviting. But upon moving the dew-covered leaf from the door things cleared up considerably. So Elric, with a burst of enthusiasm and curiosity, crawled out of the Great Brown Stalk and set out to quench his fidgetatiousness.

After walking, skipping, running, jumping, falling and four other verbs expressing modes of travel had taken him many hours from home, he sat beneath a mushroom to nap. To make a long paragraph short, he did.

Upon awakening, hunger so possessed the little moffit nimble that he was compelled to chomp off a large morsel of the canopy he'd just slept under. (Refer to previous paragraph for confirmation of probability of this event.) His tummy now quieted, Elric bounded off for new sights. But very soon the seeing became quite difficult, then all too plural at once. Everything was both upon him and far, far away, and in great confusion he stumbled through an unfamiliar part of the forest down a pathway that led he knew not where. In fact, at times he made a path as he went or took bits of the trail with him.

And so it came that this frightened, frustrated, confused, perplexed, wet little moffit nimble (not to be mistaken for romphit nimbles who have considerably less hair), covered with debris he'd brushed off the grass and low-hanging shrubs, found himself lost and tired and uncomfortable all at once at the end of the lane (or the beginning of the door depending on your vantage point). At just that time a great door opened before him and a Spiral-Tailed Lopigax began to question him quite too fast for his reeling mind to answer.

"Why, hullo nimble, what brings you here? How long can you stay? Shall you be attending dinner?"

Elric was inside and the great door fastened behind him afore he had sorted the questions. Confusion reminded him that he was not sure how he got there and frustration mounted with the issue of staying. Staying implies being somewhere and he was not yet sure where he was. One thing he **was** certain of, though, he should not like to attend dinner. In the first place his mother was more than a satisfactory cook and in the second, moffit nimbles are more often the course than the guest at a Lopigax repast. Some awareness and action with great accuracy were soon to be in order here.

PART TWO

While Elric, in the corner of the musty box-like abode, sought to untangle his spaghetti-ish mind and perceive what was happening here, the Spiral-Tailed Lopigax, whose name was Guire Saligrist, put on a large pot of water at the hearth to boil (for nimbles are best when tenderized somewhat) and began to spread the linen over the old apple crate he used for a table. By and by he turned to Elric and in a most polite manner asked, "Good friend, would you most prefer salt seasoning or pepper in your broth?"

To this Elric thought an answer was unnecessary as it merely posed a question of sneezing or shriveling as he drowned. Neither, he assumed, would entirely satisfy his recreational expectations. So he just sat quietly in the corner with his head floating about as it would, as the walls concaved and convexed at will.

The water was boiling most furiously now and it appeared that the swimming in Elric's head would soon compete with hotter turbulent wetness; for Guire Saligrist was tying a napkin about his bony neck and menacingly slithering across the room towards Elric with that look in his eyes that an August flower gets when it's raining at noon. But just then there was a timid knocking at the door. Soft at first, but persistent, and finally so annoying that Saligrist laid his knife and fork on the table and went to answer it.

The Lopigax opened the heavy door and peered out. He looked left, then right (for his very physical shape would not allow him to view both directions at once) and then finally down, to focus on a little figure hardly bigger than a minute with two very round, very open, very brown, twinkling eyes and a soft pink tongue that spoke so low Guire Saligrist implored that the message be repeated.

"I said," the small fry began again, "that it's such a nice day out that perhaps you and your guest should like to come outside and play."

Now while the Spiral-Tailed Lopigax questioned the stranger about how it knew there was someone else inside and what they would play if they did, which he didn't think they would, Elric dizzily scooted to a better vantage point to listen in. Once closer to the doorway he saw the visitor and to his surprise, though it was still blurry, it was without a doubt a romphit nimble. Moreover, it was a girl romphit nimble. She was about Elric's size, longer than a penny-candy wrapper but smaller than a breadbox, and so sleek that he thought she must surely have terrible trouble sitting still on smooth surfaces. He moved a litle closer to the door so he might hear better.

"I saw you," she was saying, "when you opened the door and let him in. Before that he's been engineering his way down the path quite rapidly and sometimes even wrong-side-upwards. I thought if you could persuade him to teach you how to do it, then —"

"What?!" interrupted the Lopigax, "have him teach me to do it? And whatever for?!?"

"Why, because then," the little romphit nimble said, with a mysteriously sassy grin, "you'd be the very handsomest creature in the entire woods."

And with that she rolled back on her sleek round bottom and sat sidewise on an abandoned orange peel. "'Course," she added, "you probably couldn't figure it out in a day."

"Wha-wha-why, I bet I could!" bellowed Guire Saligrist. "Let me just get that moffit nimble out here and I'll show you I can."

With that the Lopigax came back in and scooped Elric up in one of his scaly hands and bounded out the door. Dropping Elric, through a fall that seemed to last forever, onto a tuft of bliffer-grass and positioning himself squarely in the path, he began to shout at Elric to immediately teach him how to travel wrong-side-upwards.

Seeing that Elric was not responding just terribly fast, the female romphit nimble, whom I shall call Missy until she introduces herself, told Guire Saligrist that the first step would necessarily be to suspend his head downwise with his feet pointing branchward. And while the vain Spiral-Tailed Lopigax, in an effort to become the handsomest creature in the woods, turned his body in so many topsy-turvy positions like a wet sock, Missy grabbed Elric's tiny hand in hers and quietly, but quickly, led him away from the bliffer-grass tuft (and away from Guire Saligrist).

When they had been running for what was hopefully long enough, Missy turned to Elric and said, "Hullo there, I'm so glad we made it. The Lopigax usually eats stray nimbles. My name is Missy" — (now how about that) — "What's yours?"

Elric rocked fro and to, breathless for a moment and quite ill in his tummy, but he knew that he had to hold up his end of the conversation. After all, she had just saved his life. "What's my what?" he feebly countered. Then thinking about it a moment, he was suddenly ashamed to have said such a thing in his very first oration to her (let along his first oration in the story), so he tried again. "Thank you for tricking the Lopigax into letting me out."

"You're very welcome I'm very sure," Missy said. "What's your NAME?"

"Oh, I'm Elric," Elric said (quite truthfully). "That was a very brave thing to do. You could've easily been company stew."

"Well, that's all right," blushed Missy, "I had to help you out. The Screech-bird says that if one of the nimbles isn't safe then none of us are. If the Lopigax was to get away with eating you and developed a taste for that delicacy, why, pretty soon he'd be sliding around after all of us. But you don't look too good. You're all fuzzy like you're coming undone."

"Huh? Oh yeah, well that's because I'm sorta initially installed in this fur coat. I'm not like you, Missy. Well, not exactly. You see, I'm a moffit nimble."

"Oh dear!" gasped Missy, throwing her tiny paws to her horror-stricken face. "You mean you aren't a romphit nimble?"

"No," said Elric, "but we can still be friends I'm quite sure. Just because we're —"

But before he could enter into his ethnic speech Missy had turned and sped away into the woods. So Elric did what one might expect and ran calling after her. He was sure he could break down this communication barrier if he could just talke to her. He ran as faste as he could and caught sight of her from time to time as she glided into a thicket or scurried around a tree. Finally he saw her scamper over a little hill and he pursued so rapidly that when he discovered the other side of the hill was steeply raked, he found himself unable to stop. So he toppled down the hill into a dirty, smutty, yicky little village. All around him were column-like shoots protruding from the earth billowing black/gray blim. The blim got in his eyes and burned there until he could no longer stand it, so he wiped his brow and removed it. Then it was on his arm — dark, sticky, dirty. It was a bother to him so he wiped his arm against a sign backing hanging on one of the shoots. Then he turned the sign around and read it: "'UNWELCOME TO SNIFFLEBLIM' signed the moffit-euhs."

"Unwelcome, indeed," Elric muttered, for he knew all about the moffit-euhs. The moffit-euhs were mean, horrible, dominant urchins who made their livelihood from others' discomfort.

Just then he heard a scream and knew it must be Missy. He dashed off through the column-shoots in the direction of the scream. Rounding one he saw her being carried by a moffit-euh into an office-like dome. He darted to the window and peered in. She was put in a wirebox that had a ladder-wheel in it and stalk chips on its floor. Then the moffit-euh went back to his controls at the great blinking walls that lined the dome. Pretty soon his busy-ness had the worker preoccupied again.

Elric slipped under the door and hid by the parasol tray just inside. From here he was behind the worker and could see a row of windows that each faced a different part of the column-shoot field. This was odd, Elric

thought, since the row of gray framed windows were all on the same side of the dome, but still, that must've been how he saw Missy. And he must've left his post too soon to see Elric following.

Quietly and with great care, Elric picked up an old broken spoke from one of the parasols and aimed it at the wirebox. If he could just flip the door open she'd be free and — oh no, too much push — the box was knocked loose and falling and BANG.

As the wirebox smashed open on the floor, all kinds of commotion started. Missy and the ladder-wheel were parted — abruptly — from the box and thrown toward the door; the worker was startled out of his preoccupation and right head first into his controls, which blinked faster than ever; the windows in a row on the wall suddenly were looking out at different sights now — the bakery, a grist mill, a baseball game; and Elric and Missy, shortly after opening the door with a parasol handle, discovered that running in the opposite direction from where they wanted to go on top of the ladder-wheel made them approach it rapidly. Just as they were abandoning the wheel and topping the hill they heard a "poof," like the sound a nest makes when it falls from a branch and there's no one in the woods to hear it. They turned and saw the column-shoots no longer billowing gray/black blim but popping moffit-euhs in white suits high in the air. It looked a lot like rain — in reverse.

When they were back to the path, Missy thanked Elric for saving her life and destroying Sniffleblim. Elric blushed and asked her to come back to the Great Brown Stalk with him for honey and oatmeal.

Missy politely declined the offer because they didn't know each other that well and she had household chores to finish. Elric offered to help but she told him the neighbors might not understand.

And when everything looked awfully bleak for the moffit nimble a huge shadow covered them and they looked up to see the Giant Screech Bird perched on a rock above them. "This reech is a rare and pretty sight. Few romphits and moffits reech get together these days."

"Oh Giant Screech Bird," sobbed Missy, "that's the problem. We're so different how can we show our legions it's proper for us to be friends?"

"Reech, Reech?" yelled the Giant Screech Bird. "You're not so different. And one solution might be reech to go home and tell your families how the other of you saved reech each's life. Then you might introduce your families and they each reech to their friends." With that it flew away.

And so it was that two not so different nimbles became close friends without knowing each other well in one very busy day, just close to the beaten path. And before they waved good luck to themselves at the parting, they vowed to try to bring their legions of like-kind together. It began to drizzle as Missy scurried through the bliffer-tufts on the horizon. Elric pulled a leaf over his head and trotted homeward.

Darrell Revel
from *The Breadbox Anthology*
to be released June, 1978

Ommadawn

The chant begins
dark forms in the shadows
swaying to the rhythm
of a chant without meaning.

Something said backwards
this ancient chant
no one knows just what it means.
OMMADAWN, they chant
a druids chant
from some half forgotten memory.

Gallic mysticism enshrouds us all
as the chant rises with the beat.

OMMADAWN they chant
in unison
OMMADAWN I chant
caught up in the ritual
as the chant grows louder
with each progressive beat.

Cloaked in darkness I flee.
The fear of what that chant might mean
drives me from the circle.

Fear of the unknown
drives me running through the dark.

Fearing myself
I race lungs gasping
and heart pounding to the beat
the chant I scream to the world
OMMADAWN
in rising crescendo
running through the dark.

R. Scott Farris

Notches on the Walls

i remember
forgetting
that i remember
can't say
what i can't do
can't say why
'cause i can't remember

my head seems about to explode
and i keep wishing
i was someplace far away
if i was far away
then i'd know i'm safe

something always calls me
when i'm sitting peacefully alone
i just wish i could stay
by myself, and need no one

i'm trying to remember
why i've seen patient
is a very good thing to be
but what else could i do
besides wait

Ray Bish

Martyr

That the eagle has never fallen is relevant.

She has flown for days — for years over mudlands,
watching humans pull themselves from quicksand,
with every muscle contracting —
And she has seen them slide back in — strengthless,
motionless,
painless.

She has often smelled the olive branch, but she has
never tasted it, so bittersweet.

In all her magnificent splendor, she has spread her wide
wings across the heavens to glide through the bullets
that want her blood on the ground.

Many times she has flown like lightning through the sky
at the whimper of those in her nest — because she
had to. And she has laid herself across them for
warmth, for protection, for security,
for tomorrow.

Today the film over her accurate eyes grows thicker
from watching — and from crying.
Her beak is cracked and broken from issuing loud noises
never heard.
Her feathers are singed by torches of useless fires,
And her claws are torn and misshaped from hanging onto
very ragged dreams.

She is only sure of one thing now.
That the egg on which she dies must be — after her —
the eagle that will never be fallen.

Rhonda McGee

Tower Poetry Award

Flowers

Silence
The pencil taps, slowly, pulsations of the transfixed,
Then impatiently . . .
Wasted moments breed anxiety
Opportunity provided,
Yet the brain remains aloof
Impassive to the urgency of my want, uncooperative.
The quiet screams —

I sigh to defeat.

An unexpected moment grabs me from behind
The feeling sweeps me
A flood of emotion
Scribbles
My innermost passions flow freely, blindly
Presenting the roots of my life —
I am drained
And I pray those roots
Do not become cheap and superficial weeds
In the blossoming.

Denise Ezell

Break Out

Break out, Break out,
from the tomb in which you've encrusted yourself,
from the infinity of darkness where you dwell or hide.
Are you afraid? Is that it?
afraid of finding yourself and others?
afraid of committing yourself to a new beginning?
a new truth?
What is there to gain from remaining within?
in your hapless world where nothing is discovered,
where knowledge of anything is never sought or gained?
Where can this protective forcefield lead you?
Can it guide you; take you by the hand,
Can it take you forward and through or
just keep you stagnant?
Can anything new be found
In your shell, in that trunk where you keep
your secrets locked,
Too frightened to let anyone know what
your're really like?
What can be lost?
perhaps your fear of living, your fear of failing,
your fear of giving up.
Perhaps you can find
a new meaning, a new life, a new God.
You are given the key.
That's it, reach out.
Raise the lid of loneliness.
Yes, timidly at first
anxious to what you may find
but . . .
Break out.

Donna Pitts

Waiting Is

"Waiting is," you say
and so you wait.
For I don't know what
or who but waiting
is what you do.
Fragile you seem
like a flower
so delicate
yet you persevere
as if
waiting alone will fulfill.
Will waiting suffice
to fill the hours
and nurture the soul?
"Waiting is," you say
and so you wait.
Are you waiting still?

R. Scott Farris

Grandma Died

She sat in her chair looking out the window at the full January moon. She stretched and stretched to reach it, but the straps would not let her get close enough to put her arms through the opening and to pull the sides of the bright circle far enough apart to get rid of the darkness that surrounded her . . . . Crash! Two orderlies came in, picked her and her chair up and layed her on her bed. This triggered her thoughts . . .

It was just a normal morning. Her father had gone to work, her mother was washing the dishes, and Dawn was dressing for school without any arguments because her brother had spent the night with a friend. When suddenly her grandmother called out from her bedroom. Dawn and her mother ran to her to find her on the floor by her walker. She was too heavy for them to get to the bed so Dawn went across the street after the lady that stayed with her grandmother during the day. Both of them went running back to the house.

As Dawn, her mother, and Mrs. Dillon were working to get Dawn's grandmother onto her bed, Dawn's eyes stared straight at Mrs. Dillon's and she saw her mouth form the words, "She's dy . . . ." Dawn shouted to herself, "No, that can't be!"

There was the sound of a car horn in the drive. It was Dawn's ride to school. Her mother insisted that she go on to school and that everything would be all right.

That morning Dawn was singing with the fifth and sixth grade choral group. No one noticed how she was quietly standing around as the group lined up to go onto the stage. Black skirts, white tops; Black thoughts, white face. Dawn couldn't forget that look Mrs. Dillon had given her. She tried to talk herself out of what Mrs. Dillon said. It was time to march out onto the risers on the stage.

She was on the third row. Her eyes scanned the auditorium -- her mother wasn't there. "Oh well," she thought, "she just forgot." It was hard to remember the words to the songs. Her mind kept wrestling to get back to that morning. The audience was applauding and the girl beside her was nudging her to go off the stage. It was over. Time to change clothes and go to science class.

Later at lunch the principal walked in and talked with her teacher. Dawn became restless and uncomfortable as they kept looking over at her. The principal walked over to her and said, "There's someone in the office who would like to see you when you finish your lunch." She forced down a few bites of chicken but she couldn't wait any longer. She told her teacher she was going to the office. When she got there, her brother was already there with the neighbor who had come after them.

"Honey, go get your coat, we need to go home," the lady said softly. Dawn didn't want to know why. She ran down the hall to her classroom. She was praying quietly, "God please just let her be sick, please God, please!" She grabbed her coat and ran back.

When they pulled into the drive Dawn knew. There were too many cars, too many people who wouldn't look at her, too many dishes of food on the table.

Her mother took her and her little brother into a bedroom and said, "Grandma died . . ." Her mother started crying. Dawn just stood there saying, "I know, I know . . . ." Her little brother started crying and running to his grandmother's bedroom. There was no one there. The bed was made. He fell over onto the pillows and cried. Dawn's parents got him and held him and talked with him.

Dawn just walked back to the dining room where the relatives and neighbors were. She walked around and talked about anything. But it didn't matter, no one noticed or talked back. After all she was a big girl.

Empty voices echoed around her, "The funeral home will call when she's ready . . . . Dawn needs a dress for the funeral . . . . I'm sorry, we didn't realize . . . ."

Dawn refused to go to the funeral home. She stayed at home and played Chinese checkers with her younger cousins.

The next morning Dawn put on her new dress for the funeral. She sat on the hard pew in the area at the side of the chapel for the family. The relatives were all around. The preacher began . . ., "We sure are going to miss her . . . ." He continued, "We'll never forget her . . . ." Muffled sobs were seen by Dawn's dry eyes. The ushers closed the doors through which she could see the preacher. She heard the closing of the casket lid. They all moved out to the graveside.

The squeaking of the pulleys as the casket was lowered into the grave began to grate on her mind. She put her hands up to her ears so she wouldn't hear it, but the sound seemed to be louder inside her head. "Squeak, SQueak, SQUEAK!!!"

She began running away from the grave. Two of her uncles saw her and ran after her. Before they caught up with her she fell. When they got to her she was holding her head and screaming things she had heard over the last two days, "I'm sorry, . . . We didn't realize it was that serious . . . We sure will miss her . . . It won't be the same around here . . . ."

When the two men picked her up she screamed long and loud, "It can't be true, no, no!"

SNAP. The attendants pulled up the sides of her bed and tightened the straps across her stomach and arms and left the room. She lay there staring at the circle of light and she struggled and wriggled her fingers in an effort to touch the pretty ball hanging on the black velvet.

Cindy Shirley

Desert Vision

on the top of the mesa
he sits contemplating his quest
the mountain across the valley
he views the mountain
deep blue above the gray veil of lower valley air
he imagines cool breezes
fresh mountain streams
deepscented pine forests
meadows with wild fruit
all known to him in long treasured memory

he rises slowly
and as he does
a rock breaks free below him
and crashes down the canyon that winds into the valley
small avalanches of pebbles follow
a cloud of dust hovers

his throat is parched
he tries to swallow
and feels faint
he sits down
tired
to rest

days have passed
the dust hangs thick
and sticks to his throat
his feet are bleeding
the sun burns hot in the high noon sky
everything is silent
covered by a haze
suddenly everything blurs
and then liquifies
floating off in streams
rushing in waves and swirls
winding to a whirlpool
where a drain opens
pulling everything underground

he wakes
and sits up
wiping his brow
his eyes have burned deep
he is nearly blind

Ray Bish

Gold Lettering

The memory has been shelved
alongside other
important
but distant
memories
that are wrapped
in dark bindings
with white lettering.

The library of memories
awaits the return
of its
inquisitive owner.

One memory in the library,
the most recently placed,
hopes that when he returns
perhaps his hand
will
glide
and stop again
to pick the memory
that is wrapped in
red binding with
gold lettering.

Joy Beverly

Faltering
wavering
driven to and fro like a wave is.
Foamy madness
of the salt-briny world of sea-
weeds
and sands innumerable
sands.
Tears are like the ocean chemistry
tart -- bitter-sweet
sorrowfully moody, ever rolling
down my cheeks
silent sounds of crashing - roaring - lapping
waters, yet silent - still.
Dipping darting gulls loop and fall
catch and kill -- swallow
their prey - their food ---
me

Sarah Rankin

Hypocrisy

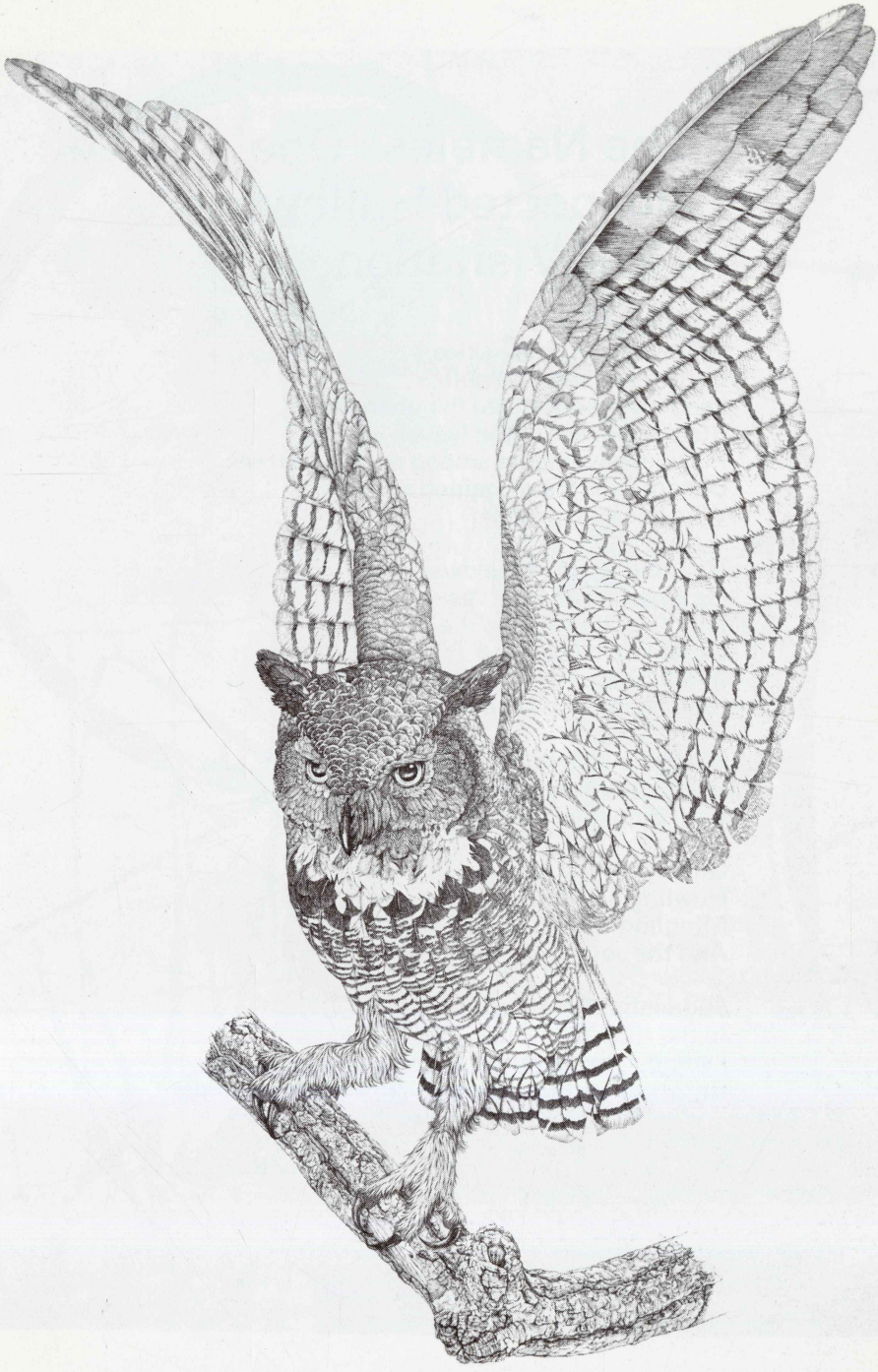
Look at all
Those people
Who take refuge
In their Sunday.
Not once have
They ever lost track
of it.
If they did
It would feel
The same as
Their Saturday nights.

Jan Dickinson

Sometimes

Sometimes
the world is colorless
And I look out
Only to see nothing.
Sometimes,
the woods appear dead,
And life is too still,
As if at rest.
Sometimes,
Life seems useless,
Only a timeless circle
With no future to be seen.
Sometimes
There appears to be no answers
To my questions
And I am lost.
Sometimes
Death seems the better bargain,
But I know
Life is good.
And I am glad
I have these doubtful feelings —
Only SOMETIMES.

Tonja Esteppe'



The Nameless One's Unexpected Halloween Visitation

A full moon
Wildly blown misty skies
Eerie mists tug and pull
Leading me deep into the unknown
Rustling voices in the leaves
Furtive movements among darkened trees
Distant calls from chained animals
Who know no peace

Handing rings to the dwarves
He crosses our wharves
Slipping silently into the night
Laughing in the wind
In the heat of the moon
His stallions ride the night

Mists blown wildly among the stars
Eerie calls from across the rivers
Galloping horses and cries of panic

Gunshot rings through the night
Howling and clashing of metal echo
Mingling with the growls of animals
And the sounds of teeth tearing flesh

Suddenly, there's splashing
In the river below me
I stand in expectation
But am surprised to feel a hand on my shoulder

Ray Bish

Reunion

I walked, wide-eyed and expectant, out the double doors of my colossal white home into the warmth of Savannah sunshine dressed in a frilly summer dress and sunhat. My cheeks were rosy from the heat and I licked my lips. A small gust of wind tried hard to tug the light hat off my unruly dark curls, and sighing disgustedly I slightly tapped it back on my head.

"Ah, Missy," breathed my grandfather as he watched me come out the door. He spent most of his time in that rocker just watching Time pass. The brightness of the sunshine made his faded blue eyes twinkle behind wire-rimmed spectacles.

"What a lovely lady you are."

"Thank you, Grandpa," I replied. I was taught respect.

"Is this the day, Missy, the one you been waitin' for so long?"

I thought of how my grandfather spoke to me; it was almost with respect. He had given me the name Missy long ago and I often wished it was my real name: I liked it much better than Sarah Janine. My father had wanted sweet southern tradition to stay in our family and be carried down through generations. Now I was the sole bearer of the Southern name, and it wasn't even his family anymore.

I cared greatly for Grandaddy, he had played the role of a father to me in all the ways he knew. He told me stories often while he whittled out peach seeds. I remember listening intently to tales of the railroad and of the men that made it work. My favorite was the exciting drama of the runaway caboose and how *he* had stopped it. I had it memorized; I would tell it to my children. After all, it was true -- for the most part.

"Grandpa, how long has it been since Papa has been here?" I leaned on the sturdy white pillar and watched my grandfather intently, knowing full well that I shouldn't be so inquisitive so often. The top of Grandpa's bald head was dark and tough as leather from long years in the sun, and his genuine smile proved that all he touched was loved. At the question, the old man's head dropped. He ran his feeble hand over his mouth, but he knew there was no need for contemplation.

"About four years, Missy, right after the War. You weren't no older'n ten. I kinda doubt you remember much about the man. When your ma turned him out, he vowed he'd never come back . . . 'cept to you. Yours was the last face he saw when he took off out o' here. I s'pose that was enough to make him keep that vow."

The old man paused, clicking the blade of his pocket knife in and out.

"Grandpa, why . . ."

"I don't know that, Missy, I don't know. Maybe it was the fever durin' the War. I don't know."

The old man became shaky and slow in his explanation. I was almost sorry I had troubled him. But he went on.

"She's much like her own man, Missy. They always told me Cathrine was . . . was mentally ill. I never b'lieved 'em. Everybody's got their little strange quirks; hers weren't no different. Look at her, Missy. Look at her. Look here at your grandmother."

I watched as he pulled an old golden locket out of his trousers pocket and in it was a small, plain, black and white photo of a truly beautiful woman. I had seen the picture many times, but I chose never to humiliate him by reminding him.

"You look just like her, Missy," he chuckled. "Indeed you do." Sometimes he smiled when he spoke of her; more often his face became pained and expressionless.

"Your ma, too, Missy, your own ma loved her very, very much."

Grandpa moved reluctantly to put the worn tarnished locket back into his pocket. It was almost like giving it a special hiding. I waited patiently. He acted so strangely when he moaned about her. He almost became dead himself. My mother, too, often became practically paralytic when Grandpa talked of her. Sarah Thorne herself would never say anything about my grandfather in front of me. As a child, I can remember vaguely being awakened by Grandpa's piercing shrieks in the early hours of daybreak. I had heard my mother go quickly to his room and I was able to hear my grandfather pleading between sobs to know why they had hung his beautiful wife from that damned tree. She wasn't crazy. She was *not* crazy. I also remember never hearing my mother's own voice in consolation or explanation. After that night, I had often seen my own mother looking out the kitchen window at the tall oak tree and had heard her murmur to herself about its strength and beauty, but I was but a child and a child's questions so often go unanswered.

"Anyway, Missy," he remembered where he was, "when your father was gone away from this house, Sarah acted like he didn't even exist. I never mentioned him; his name was like a poison. Word started around 'bout your pa's success in the military. Sarah never showed any sign of pride when others talked 'bout him so high 'n' mighty and she never wondered when he'd come home. He sent a few letters to the Post Office addressed to me, always asking 'bout you, but I never showed 'em to Sarah."

My grandpa ended the story to croon over the old dirty tan hound dog and I was left with the conclusions he gave. I tried not to stare at this man I loved so much; yet, he confused and perplexed me. I thought about his story till a cloud of dust down the road caught my eye. My grandfather sat back in his rocker; the old dog panted loudly.

"Janine." A thin woman with a whitish-gray ball of hair behind her head stood in the doorway. She spoke sternly and with authority. I turned quickly.

"Yes, mother?" I felt the fear and expectation in my eyes must be surely evident.

"Nothing."

I looked at my mother's blank stare and empty eyes and wanted to reach out to her, but turning, I ran down the old wooden steps holding my hat on my head. At the bottom of the steps I turned, but my mother was no longer in the doorway and Grandpa had once again begun his methodical rocking. The ghost and the machine.

"Go on, Missy," he whispered, prodding me gently, "go on, now."

The tired woman plunged her raw hands back into the pan of strong hot suds as she anticipated the sound of the carriage rolling away. "Oh mother, I need you. Please talk to me," she pleaded quietly. "Please tell me what to do now."

"To the beach, coachman," the man in command gave orders.

"Yessuh, Majuh Thorne. Yessuh."

My handsome father turned to me.

"My little Sarah Janine," he began. His voice was strong and confident. His eyes were warm. I knew when he looked at me that I loved him. This was my father.

"I'm sorry I can't really remember you, Papa," I began bravely. "But you are all I ever believed you to be, if I may say so." Those words were well rehearsed.

"If you may say so, my child?" the man laughed heartily, throwing his head back. "Janine, you are my daughter. Say what you like to me."

He paused.

"And you, sweet Sarah Janine, are indeed the lovely child I carried in my arms. I had hoped your hair would stay light like your mother's." He fingered one of the dark curls under my hat. As I looked at his handsome face, I saw a resemblance to myself, a pointed nose and somewhat doubting eyes. I was so happy to get to be with him. All my imaginings and all the pictures I had seen of him became suddenly real.

"Heah we ah, Majuh," the coachman announced.

"Thank you; please be back this afternoon." My father's face became stern when he began giving orders. His voice was not harsh, but what he had to say was not to be mulled over.

"Take off your shoes, Janine," he said laughingly as he tugged at his own.

"It's been a long time since I have felt the sand between my toes. As a boy, I came here often. My mother would fix picnic lunches on Sundays and my brothers and I would ride the surf all day. Charles was always the best, but we all put up a good fight for the Championship. Well, come on, let's walk. If I begin rambling about my boyhood, I never will stop." I loved to hear him laugh. It was something I was not accustomed to.

The hot sand did feel good to my bare feet. I slung my hat down by my shoes and tried out my father's real sense of childhood.

"Race you to that boulder!" I shouted, already running. My father took off after me and grabbed my hand in passing. The large rock was in the background now. We ran along the beach side by side, hand in hand, for what seemed like endless miles. The salt air was cool to our faces. I would glance up quickly at times to my father's face and it would always be looking down at me. He made me want to stay with him forever. I could have run with him until the earth ended; that's what I wanted.

Finally, we both wore down and began walking slowly in silence.

Major Thorne was quiet. He knew what I would inevitably ask and he had no answer. A battle with no preparation, an ambush with no defense.

"Tell me about my mother, Papa."

His confidence was now not so sure.

"Janine, I loved your mother. She was so happy, so free, so much like you when she was young. She always made me laugh and forget about silly things that I thought were so important. When I married her, my family was pleased, even though we were both only children, she was 16 and I was 19. Everyone thought we belonged together. I thought so too. I loved her father, your grandfather. He always made me feel welcome. We hunted together often and fished; he was like my own father."

Major Thorne stopped short.

"We had only been married a year when Sarah's mother died." He looked down to see if the child in me would question that matter, but I looked straight ahead. He went on.

"I thought the grief your mother was going through would pass soon, but it just got worse. She would have horrible nightmares and wake up screaming. Nothing I could say or do would comfort her. Often she would talk to her mother in her sleep as if she were right there in the room with us. Then she would fall peacefully asleep. I never asked her about her feelings concerning her mother. It wouldn't have done any good anyway. She was so secretive and withdrawn. The townspeople began to talk of her "crazy mother" rubbing off on her, and I became scared at what they might do. They were cruel people."

My father reached down to pick up a shell. I was patient. The fun of our meeting was turning into troubled anxiety. But what he said were things I

would have never known.

"Then you, sweet Janine." The big man put his arm around me. I was his daughter.

"I thought a baby would surely bring us closer. It made her happy for a while. She loved you so. It was almost as if she became her old self. And then the War. It was my duty, Janine, my duty even before my duty to her." He was almost apologetic.

"I know, Papa, I know." I really tried hard to understand. All I could see was the look on her face when I left her in the doorway.

"And then, after the War? Is it true she wouldn't let you in?"

"How did you know that?" Thorne was bewildered.

"Grandpa."

He sighed deeply. "It's true. I was humiliated. I didn't even get to touch you. After all that time. So I vowed I'd come back to you, when you could understand why I wasn't there."

"And Mother, Papa, what about Mother? She won't talk to me. She won't listen to me. She shuts me out." I felt tears burn my eyes for the first time. "All she ever wants is to be with Grandma. I've heard her say so, and she can't do that, Papa! Grandma is *not here*!!"

I heard myself screaming and my tears would not stop. He would surely notice now how childish I really was. But Major Thorne only held me close. The child I was trying hard to outgrow was showing through clearly. Holding my face in his big hands, my father absorbed my tears with his thumbs and brushed them off my face.

He held on to me till the sky was red and orange from the setting sun. At last, I pulled away from him and brushed across my face with my arm. I knew he would leave again. "Papa," I waded out into the still water contemplating my next question, "do you still love her?"

"No, Janine." There was no hesitation. "I don't love her anymore."

The ride home was slow and quiet. My father wrapped up my hand in his, but my wet eyes could only stare out the window at the trees and clouds flying by. I wanted to keep my father, like a toy that I enjoyed. I was going back to railroad stories and blank stares. I put my hat back on as the huge house came into sight.

"Thank you, Papa," I turned to him. Words came hard. He kissed me lightly on the mouth.

"Sweet Janine," he whispered.

The black coachman was holding the door of the carriage open and his gloved hand held mine as I stepped down.

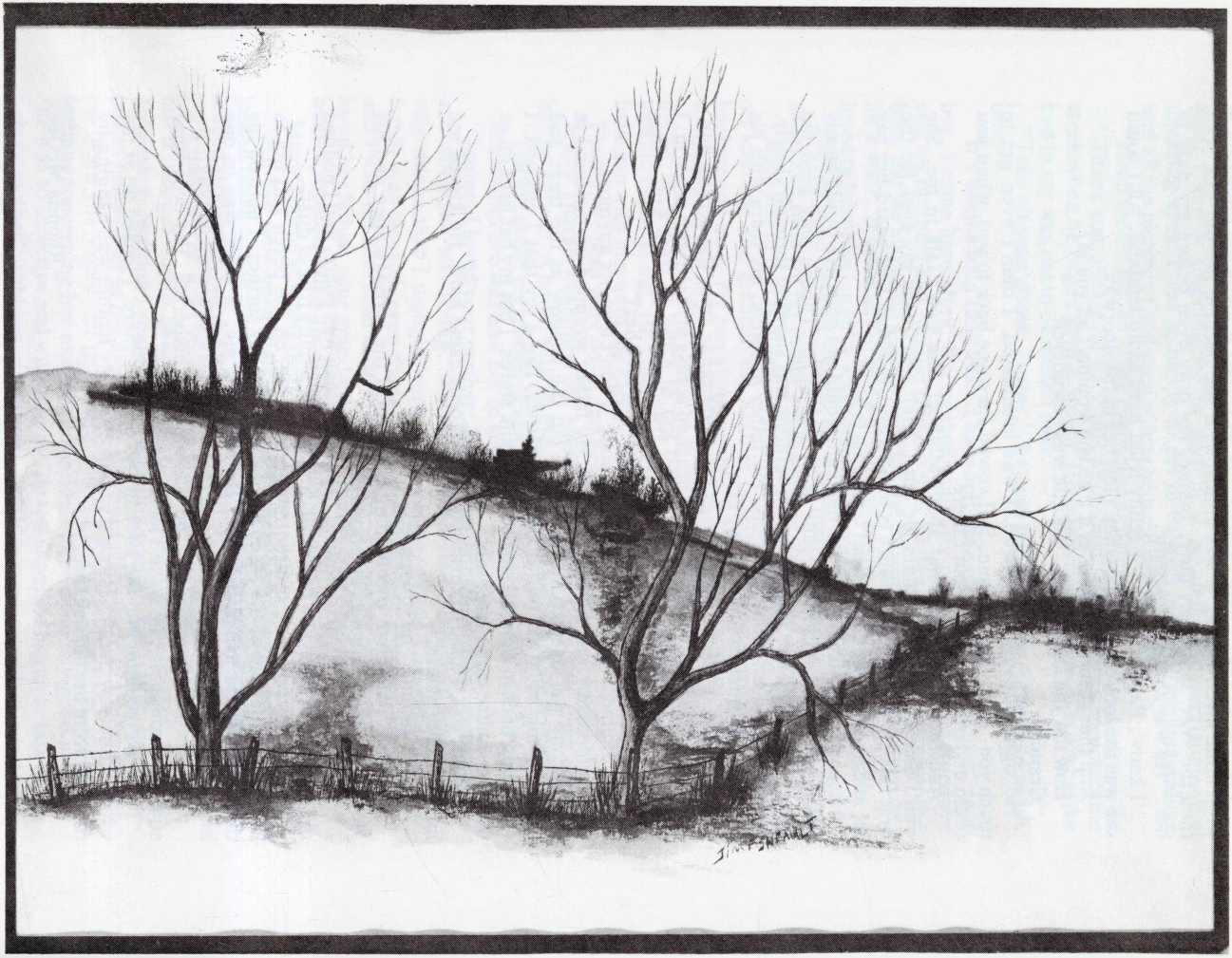
"Good day, now, Miss Janine." The coachman was polite, and I nodded my goodbye to him. The beautiful carriage left a filthy trail of dust.

Holding my hat on, I spotted my grandpa still on the porch and ran to him. At the bottom of the steps before I walked any further, I noticed his distant eyes and exhausted face. He stared at me. A knife was in one hand, a peach seed in the other and the old hound still panted heavily.

"Have a nice day, Missy?" he was almost whispering. His eyes went straight through me; he wasn't looking at me at all.

I hurried past him into the kitchen. No one was there. I looked up at the window and saw Sarah Thorne's vacant eyes. My mother was hanging by the neck from the old oak tree.

Rhonda McGee



Snow

Sparkling diamonds in a woodland
Lying among the rustic leaves
Sifted from wings of angels
Kissed by breath of winter
Placed by cruel, chilling winds
Among holly berries and cedar
Guided by elves and fairies
To throats of colorful waxwing
Playland of the timid hare
Kingdom of the deer; the majestic
Comes alive when white magic
Is performed in ghostly moonlight

James Watson

Tree

The rings show it.
You've been around for so long.
Fragile, crackly limbs.
You once stood tall and graceful, but
Now your skin is cracked with age.
You stoop with years.
Yet, generations after me will still be
Saying these things.
Maybe it's in your roots -- it's hard to tell
They're clutching the Earth almost in horror
Of being moved.

Cindy Shirley

The Pier

I walked down to the dock and
peered through the fog
But no one stood at the end of the
rickety, half-decayed pier.
Of course no one had said they'd
meet me there. And I bog
Down on more self-critical thoughts of
'just why *am* I here?'

Now I turn to walk away, but just
one more silent glance
At the boat house and the dock where we
often use to meet.
We'd stand like proud owners of everything new,
the picture of perfect romance.
Often times we wouldn't say a word,
our thoughts entwined complete.

We had so many happy times stealing
pages from youth's manuscript
And bravely engaging in missions of
the promiscuous kind.
Still, I suppose we took too lightly
the value or preciousness of the gift
Until now, when I reflect alone of
the banquet we left behind.

Some folks say I loved her too much, and
others say she me.
Yet not so much *how much*, I think,
as how fast loved each on each.
Was the reason in the end that we seemed
to go separately,
Because after those few fast years where
else could we reach?

But this is fancy talk, there must have
been some explanation
Given when the union was dissolved. Think
back -- let me see --
Oh, yes. Now I recall, we played it to the
hilt blaming each's occupation.
She couldn't be secure with a thespian
nor I a secretary.

So when she sent me packing I immediately
forgot her, too.
Was looking when I found her, fate will bring
another love my way.
And for almost a year now I've told
myself that it's true
About not missing her. I told myself again
on the way here today.

Darrell Revel
From *The Breadbox Anthology*
to be released June, 1978

Hiakus

Wind in the rigging
Tiller held in steadfast hand
Turn, turn, back to the sea.

Jerry A. Grimes

A timeless place
Swept clean by each receding wave
Tides are lasting things.

Jerry A. Grimes

Tower Photography Award
(opposite page)

DRINK
PEPSI COLA
5¢

Moonlight through the Window

someplace back there
so long ago
i only quite remember
sometimes, late at night
with the moon to help me
i was an elf prince
in a kingdom of dreams
i lived on clouds
and i could fly

but one day i woke
to find my feet wouldn't leave the ground
i could not fly
no matter how hard i tried

longing for the cloudtops
i sat in the meadow every afternoon
dreaming i was secretly an elf
in the kingdom of dreams
as they formed and changed faces
in clouds shimmering softly
drifting slowly into a hazy horizon

nightly i gazed out at the forbidden world
from my window
and saw, glowing luminously in the moonlight
a stairway beyond the stars

one night as i slept
i dreamt i was a prince
carrying gold pieces in my pouch
walking inside the gate of a great city
in a far away land
the sun was rising and the stars twinkling

i passed a lady
whose face was hidden in shadow
i heard a voice whisper
beckoning me
and as i turned to follow
with a flash of darkness
i awoke to find myself home in bed
i jumped and ran to the window
and tears filled my eyes
for that i'd never again be
a prince in my kingdom

but as i ran my hands over my eyes
i saw they had become elf hands
and with a touch of my fingertips
the glass vanished and i ran
in the shade of the forest
beneath the full midnight moon

as i reached the meadow
a moonbeam struck me
giving me flight
and i lept and flew
soaring through irridescent vapors
above the mountains and rivers
whistling through rainbows
to the beginning of dreams

i flew so far so fast
i lost all my colors
and like a comet
i burned away through the night
until cold in the morning dew
i returned, walking slowly back to my house

at the gate there awaited me
tall figures in dark robes
with enshadowed faces
and they called me and grabbed my arm
and pulled me
but i would not yield
and with a cry i was torn in half
and the elf that was me
was pulled away
and changed into a cricket
and placed in a cage
and taken upstairs and locked behind doors
but i, my shadow, fled to walk the world
and returned no more

the world was gray and empty
and people came in parades
with longer and stranger faces
and i became them all by being none
and like a chameleon
i grew coldblooded and quiet in my ways
lying in the sun
listening to distant whisperings
and the rumbling of a great storm
approaching slowly

Ray Bish

Sunset

Flaming red streaks
Stretching across the edge of the earth,
Fading into long pink fingers
With orange painted nails.
Deep purple mountains,
Darkness,
A star.

Heidi Newman

Judy

"Hurry up, girl! It's time for the bus!" her father boomed.

Judy drowned the stack of sticky plates in the dishpan and ran to her room, shaking the water from her fingers. She looked down into the mirror and smeared on another coat of blue eye-shadow. Then she stroked on more mascara, getting closer and closer to the eye with each stroke of the brush until she poked herself in the eye and blinked the sooty mess all over her lower eyelid. She slammed the makeup back in the drawer, hurried to her closet and lovingly extracted her blue-and-yellow checked pants. She tried hard to remember whether she wore the blue sweater or the yellow sweater with them yesterday -- or was it the white blouse?

Since she thought she could hear the bus coming (or maybe it was just that load of greasy overalls and dark socks and nylon underwear going into spin), she grabbed the blue sweater and pulled it over her head, scattering curlers all over the room. Then she jumped into the blue-and-yellow pants and ripped out another section of the hem. After walking into her sandals, she started to hobble out, adjusting the heel straps on the run -- but she remembered the curlers still dangling from her hair. These she tore out and threw in the general direction of the dresser. She brushed frantically; the curlers had done their overnight job too well and her already short hair was curled up above her ears. Her bangs hung in one tight coil. Now she heard the bus for sure. She sighed at the unmade bed, then at her reflection. Why couldn't she look like Jenny on *One Life To Live*?

Judy rushed past her father in the living room without turning her head to say goodbye. It was true that Duell had forbidden her to wear makeup -- when Miss Effie down the road remarked how cute she looked with red lipstick on, he had jerked her up and called her a little Jezebel and various stronger terms -- but in the morning he was generlly too hung over to notice and in the afternoon he was not there. This morning he was in a fatherly mood so he yelled after her, "Bye, punkin!" Judy cringed and hoped the kids on the bus hadn't heard him.

He always talked loud like that; he had to or he couldn't hear himself. Roscoe, his older brother and an occasional preacher, once told him that if he didn't stop drinking he was going to be as deaf as a white cat, but Duell just said that he liked what he was drinking better than what he was hearing.

School was a different world, like going through a force field. There was Vicki, who always wore a pair of ragged jeans with a tongue patch on the seat and a rose-colored T-shirt with beige lace around the neck. She had hair that was the color of copper when it was clean and the color of cheap pantyhose when it was not. If Judy had a "best friend," Vicki was it. They were in the same grade in school but Vicki was a couple of years older and therefore had lost most of her little-girl pudginess (I bet her daddy don't call *her* Punkin anymore, Judy would think, seething) and could boast a height over five feet and a bra size out of the double letters.

Vicki's best friend was not Judy but Sherry, who was *engaged*. She got her ring in a more romantic moment at the drive-in last Thursday night (which is discount night). Of course she was showing it to everybody on Friday morning, and even Judy got to look at it up close. Then Donna walked up in her seventy-eight dollar dress from Ratliff's -- she has a *charge account* there you know, and actually owns a curling iron -- and said, "Oh Sherry! I want to see your ring!" Sherry smiled proudly and held out her hand. Donna took hold of her middle finger, making sure that her own three-carat diamond would catch the light. She looked, she bent her head down, she brought Sherry's hand closer to her eyes, she blinked her contact lenses back into place, she squinted. "Oh, how cute!" she said. "Is it a pre-engagement ring?"

Naturally the girls talked louder and longer about Donna's behavior than about the engagement itself. It was a drama to be re-enacted for weeks to come.

It so happened this morning that Vicki was the first conversationable girl Judy met as she walked down the hall toward her locker. All schools have a rigid and absolute pecking order, so Judy had to speak first.

-- Howdy.

-- Oh, hi, Judy. How was your weekend?

-- It was all right.

-- Well, where'd you go Saturday night?

-- Oh, nowhere.

-- Nowhere? You poor thing.

-- Uh, well, David came over and we watched the movie on Channel Six.

-- Is he the one from Falkville?

-- Uh huh. In Blount County, you know. It's not far.

-- Uh huh. Well, this weekend I . . .

-- David's real cute. He's the best man I've ever had. We'll probably get married before long . . .

-- Uh huh, that's nice. But Saturday night me and C.W. went . . .

-- C.W. Rice?

-- Yes. We . . .

-- The C.W. Rice I know? The one in my math class?

-- Of course. How many can there be?

-- He called you and, and asked for a date?

-- No, he just came up to me after lunch Thursday and asked me.

-- And your mama let you go?

-- Mama didn't know about it. I went home with Mona that night.

-- Mona's your big sister?

-- Yeah.

-- Where'd y'all go?

-- Mostly just riding around.

-- Yeah?

-- Yeah.

-- Was it fun?

-- Yes.

-- Are, are y'all gonna go steady now?

-- Yeah. See? He gave me this leather bracelet with his name on it.

-- Wow. With his name on it. Oh, did I ever show you this necklace? David gave it to me for Christmas.

-- Oh, that's cute. But I thought I heard you say your uncle gave it to you.

-- Uh, no, not this one. My uncle gave me the Oreo cookie necklace.

-- Uh huh. C.W. already said he'd take me to the eighth grade dance next month. I can't wait. Do you think David'll take you?

-- David? Oh, I don't know. He works on Saturday nights.

-- But the dance is on Friday night.

-- Really? Well we might come then, if he don't have to work, or if he's got enough gas in his car, or . . .

-- Yeah. You say he's so cute, I'd like to see him. Do you have a picture?

-- No, not . . .

-- You don't? Why not?

-- I have one, but it's at home.

-- Well, if it was me I'd carry it around with me all the time. Bring it tomorrow so I can see it. Well, there's the bell. Don't forget to bring that picture tomorrow.

-- Oh Lordy.

-- What?

-- Nothing.

Carolyn Parker

I long to reach out,
But it's a cold world out there —
And even warm hearts freeze after a while.

Tonja Esteppe'

The Appearance

You're invited.
It's all a grand performance.
A one night stand
like Nashville's never seen.

I am the cast and crew,
the bookie and the band,
So all you do is come.

I never make mistakes:
I have a hundred masks
which never fail,
a hundred opaque faces
to make you laugh,
cry,
scream,
and cringe,
and shudder;
But if, for one instant,
I reveal a face of boredom,
don't believe that face.
It's simply that I missed my cue
and I'm confused.

There is no intermission,
no smoking,
no free passes.
The tickets are expensive,
but it's worth it.
Don't be late.
The show may close
tomorrow.

Mary Anderson

Shadow

Come close, please
And touch me,
But don't let me know
Be silent,
Be brief
Like the first winter's snow.
It's not that I fear you —
Close isn't my style.
What's hidden won't hurt you
What does lasts a while.
So I need you to be there,
But like fog in the dawn,
When I awaken
I trust you'll be gone.

Denise Ezell

The Medicine Ball

The miraculous revelation of preternatural facts from the Oracle astounded the world. No one had imagined that the facts would come as they did; their coming was too abrupt, too sudden . . . powerful confusion abounded.

The object had been found by a group of student-archaeologists from the University of Wisconsin. They, of course, turned it over to the American Consulate in Beirut for handling; after all, what could they have done with a black ball, approximately two feet in diameter, with no visible markings? It certainly couldn't have been an artifact from the time period they were interested in, that is, the time of the Apostle Peter. The consulate turned the object over to the Tamisch Analytical Laboratory in Mexico City, believing it to be the best bet if they were to find out what exactly it was that the young scientists had discovered.

"The study is a failure, Grogan," said Szymk. The night had been dragging along with the correlation of data from the study -- what little of it there was -- and everyone was tired: Szymk in particular. "We have been studying this thing for six months, and we don't know any more than when we started. It isn't amenable to any form of analysis we can come up with. None of our test probes can chip a sample from it for an elemental analysis, no spectral studies give anything . . . nothing can dent the sonofagun! Lasers, microwaves, oxyhydrogen torches, intense gamma radiation, nothing! How are we supposed to analyze a sphere made of some material that is impervious to every form of analysis available? We might as well admit we're beaten and send the thing to the Astral Museum in Puerto Vallarta!"

They did this, and no one was the wiser . . . for a while.

"John, come here, quick!" The scream was pure fright in content, quavering in the air with the smell of ozone and dead animals. "That thing from Tamisch -- it's glowing!" It was glowing, there could be no doubt; an ethereal pall fell over the room in which it was housed, casting vagrant shadows on the walls that gleamed with an eerie, supernatural light. John came into the room just as it/that/the thing OPENED . . .

The spheroid broke open at the top, exposing a hideous shade of purple within. Slowly, a small, eyelike appendage slid out, peered at them, and became still. A voice spoke, a voice with a sound like the blooming of roses, like the running of a New England stream . . . "At last, the time has come for my long hibernation to end. Would you be so kind as to notify the proper authorities that I wish to speak to them without delay?"

John, the more stout-hearted of the guards, notified the personnel at Tamisch, who in turn notified the American government. The arrival of their respective officials came amazingly soon thereafter. Then began the miraculous revelation of preternatural facts.

The exact wording of the Oracle's (so it called itself) remarks needn't be repeated here. We all know the result was more than worth the Oracle's long (he said almost two millenia) wait. In the space of a few short hours, he revealed all the secrets science had for so long sought to unravel: time travel, immortality, the abolition of disease, solution of the population problem, the real implications of the laws of thermodynamics . . . . Everything, from the least important to those things on whose solution mankind depended. We did as he said, skeptically at first, then with near blind obedience. We are much better off for the appearance of the Oracle, to be sure.

Having completed the job that He had promised so long ago to return and do, Jesus left . . . saying He'd be back if we screwed up a second time.

Austin Reid

A Work of Art

The human body
So perfect in every way . . .
beautiful.

God's gift to man
Fashioned in His very image
Moulded as by the sensitive hands of a potter to his clay.

Without His touch
Without His breath of life . . .
nothing.

Mere molecules, atoms,
Sheer energy without form or mass . . .
a brain.

A genuine miracle
Not to be looked upon with shame
But to be admired as a beautifully sculptured urn
housing the spirit of man.

A work of art
Bones giving structure, stability . . .
shapes flowing.

A passage of wonder
Muscles flowing into other muscles . . .
and lines repeated.

This complex composition
So challenging to the eye of the beholder, whether artist or poet,
Is a unified whole; a creation of God.

Donna Pitts

Here
Of late
In land of young and free
All months are cruel
April is windy.

Somehow
It is like that . . .
in the end.

Billy Watt